Purcell Wilderness Conservancy

MASTER PLAN

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PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY

PROVINCIAL PARK

MASTER PLAN

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PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY

MASTER PLAN

A. PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

- The Master Plan confirms the original intent for establishing the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy: to provide a recreational wilderness and to preserve natural features and ecosystems of the Purcell Mountains. On this basis, the Conservancy represents the epitome of "wilderness recreation opportunities" in the southern interior of British Columbia.

- The Plan separates the Conservancy into three areas to define different visitor use and resource management objectives:

  - West Side - Fry and Carney Creek drainages are managed to retain the pristine wilderness that existed in 1974 when the Conservancy was established. To minimize evidence of unnatural disturbance on the landscape, human activities are managed to prevent impacts or signs of or use. Horse use is not permitted.

  - Earl Grey Trail - The Toby Creek and Hamill Creek drainages are managed as a historic trail corridor. In keeping with the overall wilderness concept for the Conservancy, the trail is maintained in a rugged state (type 3 to 4 park trail standard), suitable for experienced backcountry users. Horse use will be restricted to the Toby Creek side of the trail.

  - East Side - This includes the drainages of South Toby Creek, Dutch Creek, Findlay Creek, Skookumchuck Creek, Dewar Creek and St. Mary's River. Management of these drainages recognizes the established trails and facilities and allows for traditional horse use and guide-outfitting.

- The Plan recommends that the original establishing Order-in-Council be retained, and ultimately that the Conservancy be designated as a Class A Park to provide the strongest legislative protection available. The name Purcell Wilderness Conservancy will be retained.

- The Plan provides direction for managing the resources of the Conservancy. There is an emphasis on maintaining the existing natural diversity of plant and wildlife communities, while, as far as possible, allowing natural processes to proceed without human intervention.

- The Plan outlines visitor use policies to ensure essential qualities of a wilderness experience. Management strategies are directed toward maintaining remoteness, solitude and dependence on wilderness skills and self reliance. Policies and strategies relate to:

- access management - maintaining "no public vehicle use" beyond existing trailheads through cooperation with the Ministries of Forests and Environment.

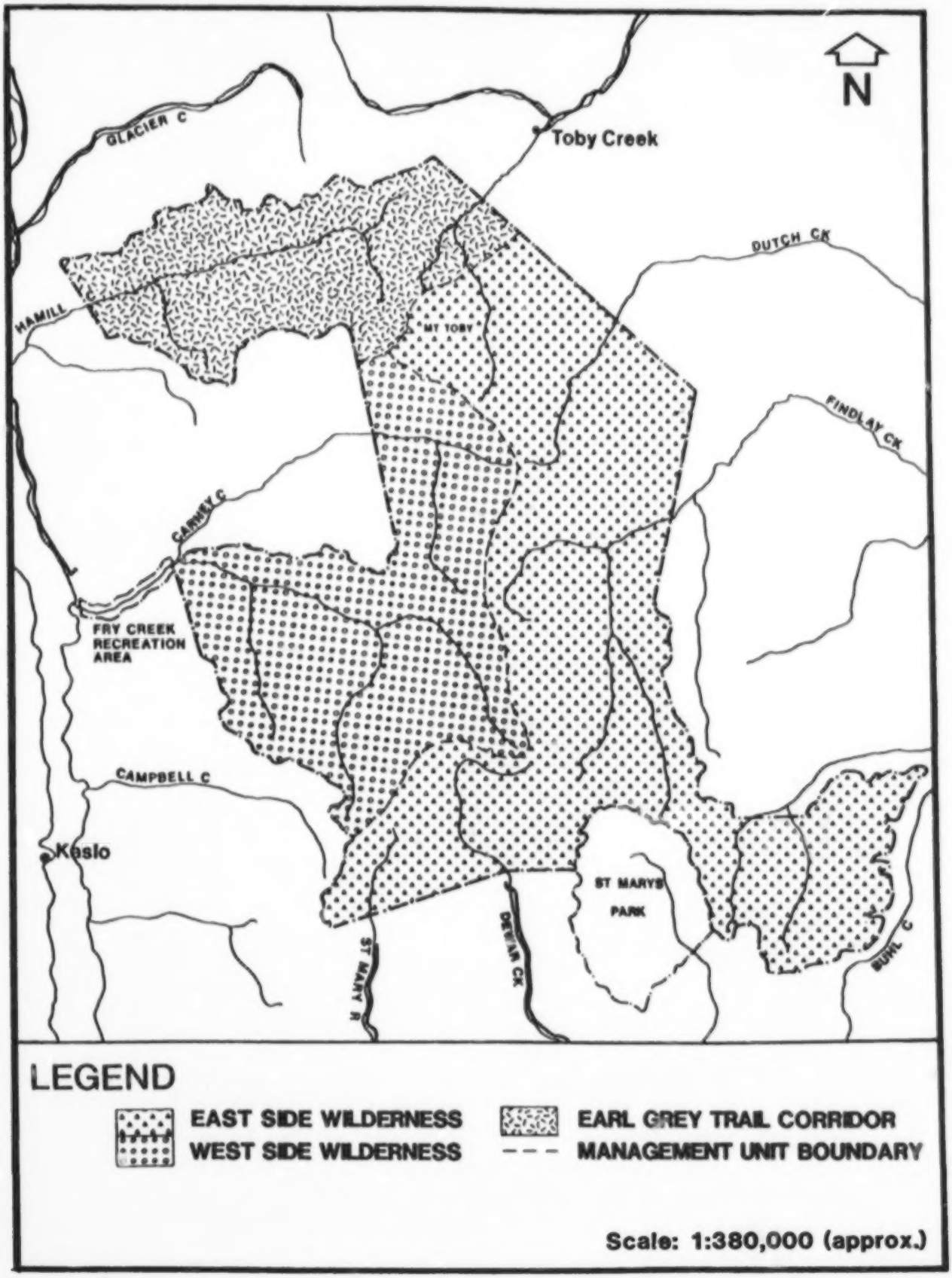
- maintaining the Earl Grey Trail and existing main trails in the south and east side drainages in adequate condition; no new trails, facilities or directional signs within the Conservancy except where required to protect the environment or maintain public safety.

- limiting information on the Conservancy to a general description of the nature and types of recreational opportunities through a brochure; and encouraging low impact camping and wilderness travel techniques and a code of wilderness use ethics through the brochure and trailhead information panels.

- The Plan advocates continued public involvement through meetings with key interest groups. This would assist BC Parks to develop management plans for vegetation, wildlife and other resources, and deal with issues and concerns relating to recreational use and management of the Conservancy.

PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY

MANAGEMENT UNITS



B. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Plan

In 1986, the government-appointed Wilderness Advisory Committee recommended that the boundaries of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy be reviewed and that the Ministry of Parks prepare a Master Plan with public consultation for the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy. This timely recommendation coincided well with Ministry of Parks' intentions to proceed with a Master Planning project for the Conservancy. Since the designation of the Conservancy in 1974, park managers had relied on guidelines provided by the establishing Order-in-Council for making a variety of decisions relating to public use and management of the Conservancy. However, as these guidelines were general in nature and subject to interpretation, more definitive policy directions were needed, particularly to deal with a number of pressing management issues. The Ministry of Parks also proposed to use the Master Planning process to obtain information for use in a separate inter-agency boundary review process. On this basis, the Ministry sought public input and advice in developing a Master Plan for the Conservancy.

As initial steps in the Master Planning process, all available resource and use data was documented and summarized in a Master Plan Background Report to serve as a resource atlas and as a reference for formulation of the Master Plan. Also, in conjunction with parks staff assessments of recreation and conservation values in the Conservancy, the Ministry of Environment was asked to develop an indepth biophysical inventory of the Conservancy and the surrounding drainages. All of this background resource information is available for viewing upon request from the Ministry of Parks' offices.

The Purcell Wilderness Conservancy Master Plan states the roles, objectives and policies for use and management of the Conservancy and its resources. The Plan provides direction on a number of key issues which primarily relate to appropriate types and levels of recreation use and strategies for managing vegetation, wildlife and wilderness resource values. The Plan is based on the principles and purposes outlined in the original Order-in-Council establishing the Conservancy, but also draws on the Park Act and associated regulations and agency policies.

The Master Plan was produced by a team of parks staff from the East and West Kootenay district, Southern Interior region, Victoria headquarters' Park Planning and Conservation section and Visitor Services section. The team also included Fish and Wildlife staff from the East and West Kootenay districts and staff from the Ministry of Environment's Nelson region and headquarters. The Ministries of Forests and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources also were consulted in developing the plan. The planning process relied heavily on input from the general public, involving open house meetings and formal feedback through a questionnaire, and consultation with numerous public interest groups in the East and West Kootenays and the Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C. in Vancouver.

2. Planning Issues

The Master Plan and the public involvement process have addressed a number of concerns and issues relating to:

- the appropriate status and legislation for the Conservancy;
- designating zones relating to different management objectives for the Earl Grey Trail and the east and west side drainages;
- policies and guidelines for visitor use and management;
- strategies for provision of road access to the Conservancy;
- recommendations for dealing with existing mineral claims;
- management presence and operations requirements;
- signing and information policies;
- appropriate types and levels of facilities;
- maintenance standards for the Earl Grey Trail;
- guidelines for vegetation and wildlife management;
- policies for guiding and outfitting and other commercial activities;
- criteria for horse use;
- policies for hunting and trapping.

3. Background Summary

Intense lobbying by conservation and recreation interests in the late 1960s and early 1970s to preserve wilderness in the Purcell Mountains led to the establishment of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy in 1974 through special Order-in-Council designation under the Environment and Land Use Act. Later Order-in-Council amendments provided for application of the Park Act and regulations in the Conservancy.

The 131,523-hectare Conservancy straddles the crest of the Purcell Mountain Range taking in the top ends of the drainages of Toby, Dutch, Findlay, Skookumchuck and Dewar Creeks and the St. Mary River on the east side and major portions of Hamill, Carney and Fry Creek drainages on the west side. Roads lead to the Conservancy boundary on the south end in Dewar and St. Mary drainages, but in the remaining drainages on the east side and west sides, present roads end well outside of the boundaries.

The Conservancy represents primarily sub-alpine and alpine landscapes and biological conditions of the Purcell Mountain Range of the southern Columbia Mountains. The Purcell Range is characterized by steep, rugged mountains and deeply incised valleys. The highest and most glaciated peaks in the Conservancy—Mt. Truce (3,250 m), Mt. Hamill (3,244 m) and Mt. Toby (3,212 m)—are located in its northernmost part. The west side of the range is drained by relatively short, steep creeks while the east side, by comparison, has longer, lower gradient creeks.

The geological history of the Conservancy is complex and exhibits some of the oldest rocks in the province and an array of sedimentary, metamorphic and igneous formations. Mountain building processes have created massive peaks in

the northern part of the Conservancy, more eroded, rounded summits on the east side, and sharp, jagged peaks to the west and southwest.

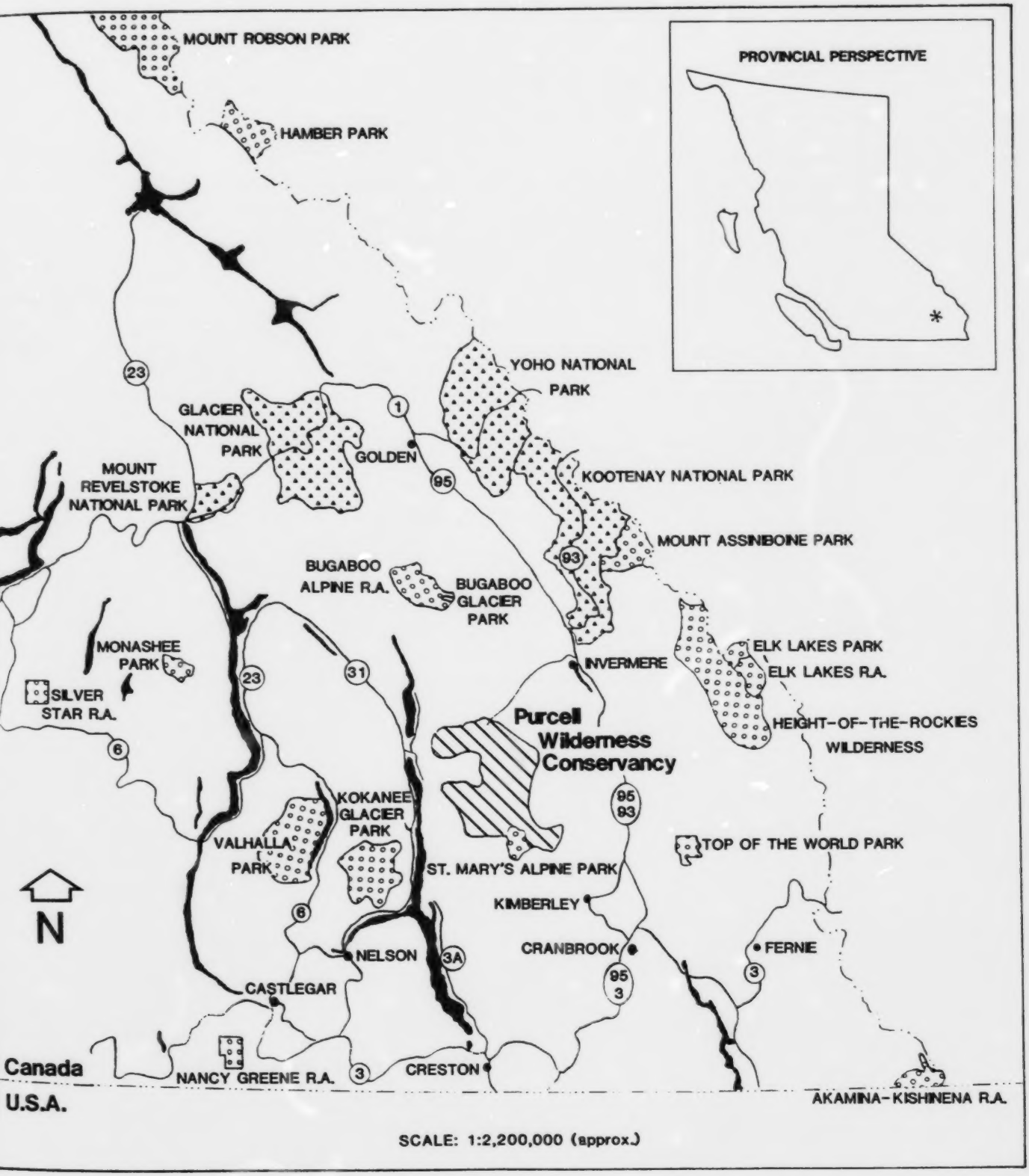
The Conservancy contains a diversity of plant communities ranging from alpine tundra and subalpine forests of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir in the higher regions to interior wet belt forests of cedar and hemlock in the west side drainages and dryer montane type forests dominated by fire successional stands of lodgepole pine on the east side. Marshes, fire-patterned forests, slide paths, cold air drainage meadows and talus slopes give rise to a wide variety of tree, shrub, grass and herb species.

The wide variety of plant communities form the basis for the diversity of wildlife species and habitats found in the Conservancy. All of the ungulates of the Kootenay region, with the exception of bighorn sheep, are found within the Conservancy as well as most species of carnivore, a variety of smaller mammals and more than 90 bird species. The wildlife resources of the Conservancy, particularly the large populations of elk and, to a lesser extent, mountain goat, are of provincial and national importance.

The Conservancy is considered one of the most significant wilderness areas in southern B.C. and is recognized provincially for its scenery and wilderness recreation opportunities, particularly backpacking, mountaineering, wildlife viewing, horseback riding and hunting. All activities are associated with the wilderness experience which is strongly dependent on a sense of remoteness and naturalness. Most of the Conservancy can only be explored on overnight or multi-day trips. The distances involved, the ruggedness and isolation, and the minimal restrictions on where to camp and travel have special appeal to wilderness enthusiasts. By its very nature, the Conservancy experiences dispersed use and numbers of visitors are low compared to more developed backcountry parks or recreation areas. The Conservancy is used by local residents and to a growing extent by visitors from other regions of the province, other provinces, the United States, Europe and other countries.

PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY

REGIONAL LOCATION



SCALE: 1:2,200,000 (approx.)

C. THE ROLE OF THE CONSERVANCY

1. Regional and Provincial Context

The Purcell Wilderness Conservancy preserves one of the largest tracts of undisturbed wilderness in the Kootenays and the southern interior of British Columbia.

The establishing Order-in-Council for the Conservancy defines the Conservancy as a "recreational wilderness" and as "an expanse of natural environment which contains outstanding or representative examples of scenery and natural history, uninfluenced by the activities of man, and which is particularly suitable for extensive primitive recreational use".

The establishing Order-in-Council also sets forth guidelines to protect the intrinsic wilderness qualities of the Conservancy:

"A recreational wilderness area will be maintained as a roadless tract in which both natural and ecological communities are preserved intact and the progression of the natural systems may proceed without alteration. No exploitation or development, except that necessary for preservation of natural processes, is permissible. Use of recreational wilderness shall be limited to activities which do not detract from or disturb the wilderness experience sought by visitors to the area. These uses include hiking, climbing, camping, trail riding, nature study, fishing and hunting. All forms of commercial activity as well as the use of combustion engines for recreational purposes shall be prohibited. Any improvement or development will be limited to that which is required to protect the environment and to insure the safety of the visitor."

Subsequent amendments to the Order-in-Council clarified that the existing, long-established commercial activities of guide-outfitting, recreation guiding and trapping were allowed, and that the Conservancy, would be managed "as though it were a park as defined in the Park Act".

No other wilderness area in the province has been designated under the Environment and Land Use Act or has had management guidelines specifically written into its establishing Order-in-Council. This special status was intended to emphasize the significance of the Conservancy as the largest remaining block of wilderness in southeastern British Columbia. Under BC Parks' management, the Conservancy fits into a provincial park system which is designed to provide a range of wilderness recreation experiences from relatively well developed, safe and easily accessible backcountry areas to remote, undeveloped landscapes. In this system, parks such as Kokanee Glacier and Top of the World provide trail systems, facilities and information which encourage use of most areas by visitors with relatively basic levels of backcountry skills and experience. Other parks like Valhalla, Elk Lakes, and Mount Assiniboine are large enough to focus relatively high use into well developed core areas, while retaining wilderness zones for lighter use by more experienced backcountry travellers. Because of its size, the

Purcell Wilderness Conservancy stands out as having the scope to provide not only the "historic wilderness" of the guide and outfitter, with his trails, camps and remote cabins, but also large areas undisturbed by human development where experienced and properly prepared visitors can enjoy the most primitive wilderness in the park system. The guidelines in the establishing Order-in-Council clearly intend that the greatest value of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy will be its representation of this far end of the wilderness spectrum, where pristine wilderness conditions prevail, where isolation and scale of country guarantee solitude and where visitors must depend on their own self reliance, skills and experience for wilderness travel and recreation.

In order to manage the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy as part of the provincial park system, the intent of the original Order-in-Council has been expressed in the following specific statements of conservation and recreation roles and objectives:

2. **Conservation Role and Objectives**

   a. To represent and preserve a portion of the central Columbia Mountains and east Purcell Mountains regional Landscapes.

   b. To maintain the wilderness character and qualities of the environment and features which were present in the Conservancy at the time of its designation.

   c. To allow progression of natural systems to evolve with minimum human interference and alteration, subject to the priorities of protecting special ecological features and maintaining the representative characteristics of the regional landscape.

3. **Recreation Role and Objectives**

   a. To provide for a variety of activities consistent with wilderness backcountry recreation while minimizing conflicts between user types and emphasizing the preservation of options for the primitive end of the wilderness recreation spectrum. Examples of appropriate activities are hiking, backpacking, mountain climbing, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, photography, nature study, Nordic skiing and snowshoeing.

   b. To ensure that the nature and scale of park development and use are compatible with the maintenance of wilderness values.

   c. To recognize established recreational guiding and outfitting on the eastern drainages of the Conservancy (as a traditional use).

   d. To maintain the historic Earl Grey Trail as a wilderness hiking route.

   e. To provide general information emphasizing the suitability of the Conservancy for well prepared wilderness users.

D. ZONING PLAN

The "Wilderness Recreation" and the "Special Feature" zones are the two zones defined under the provincial park zoning system which apply to management of the Conservancy. Key management criteria for the zones are: (see appendix B for detailed description of zones which apply to wilderness.)

Wilderness Recreation

1. Provision for wilderness recreation opportunities in a remote natural environment.
2. Low use, with emphasis on solitude and extended overnight trips rather than day use.
3. Non-mechanized access.
4. Large size.
5. Limited facilities consistent with the wilderness experience.
6. Hunting is permitted subject to guidelines in the Master Plan. The "wilderness conservation zone", the other zone in the provincial park zoning system which relates to wilderness, does not allow for hunting.

Within the "wilderness recreation" zone, three separate areas are identified for management purposes.

a. West Side

Fry and Carney Creek drainages are managed to retain the pristine wilderness that existed in 1974 when the Conservancy was established. To minimize evidence of unnatural disturbance on the landscape, all human activities are managed to prevent impacts or signs of travel or use. Horse or pack animal use is not permitted.

b. Earl Grey Trail Corridor

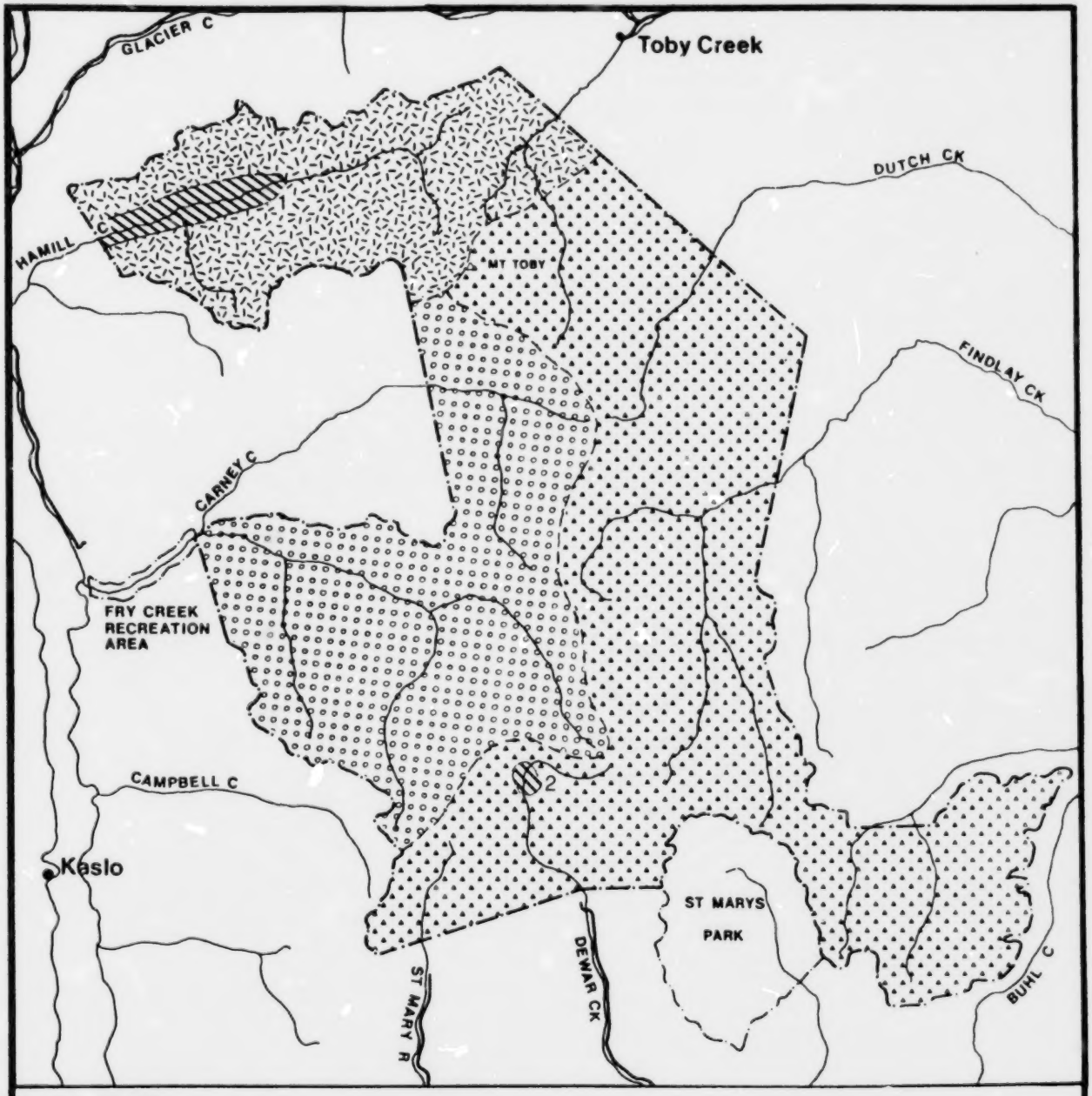
Encompasses Toby Creek and Hamill Creek drainages and is managed as an historic trail corridor. In context with the overall wilderness concept for the Conservancy, the trail is maintained in a rugged state (park standard 3 or 4) suitable for experienced backcountry users. However, because of its focus as an historic and provincial recreation trail corridor, the Earl Grey trail will receive a higher profile than the remainder of the Conservancy for facilities and user information. Horse or pack animal use will only be permitted in the Toby Creek drainage side of the trail corridor.

c. East Side

Includes the drainages of South Toby Creek, Dutch Creek, Findlay Creek, Skookumchuck Creek, Dewar Creek and St. Mary River. Management of these drainages recognizes the established trails and facilities and allows for traditional horse use, pack animal use and guide-outfitting.

PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY

ZONING AND MANAGEMENT UNITS



LEGEND

WILDERNESS RECREATION ZONE UNITS

EAST SIDE WILDERNESS

WEST SIDE WILDERNESS

EARL GREY TRAIL CORRIDOR

MANAGEMENT UNIT BOUNDARY

SPECIAL FEATURE ZONE UNITS

1. HAMILL CREEK OLD-GROWTH FOREST
2. DEWAR CREEK HOTSPRINGS

Scale: 1:380,000 (approx.)

Special Features

1. Primary purpose is the protection of significant natural values, because of their uniqueness and fragility.

2. Low use, although higher levels may be associated with certain attractions (ie. Dewar Hotsprings).

3. Boundaries defined by biophysical characteristics.

4. May be subject to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.

5. Facilities may be required to protect the resource.

The two identified Special Feature zones are:

1. Hamill Creek Special Feature Zone: established to protect old growth western hemlock and cedar stands in the creek valley; and,

2. Dewar Creek Hotsprings Special Feature Zone: established to protect the provincially significant and fragile hotsprings ecosystem.

E. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

Resource management policies in the Conservancy will be largely directed by the original concept as set forth in the establishing Order-in-Council to ensure that "natural and ecological communities are preserved intact and the progression of natural systems may proceed without alteration".

On a philosophical basis this concept is strongly supported, however, there are some limitations to its application. There is an inherent contradiction between the principles of non-intervention (letting nature take its course) and preservation of intact natural ecosystems. In this context, there is also the realization that the Conservancy is becoming an island of undeveloped wilderness, containing significant values which are being lost or modified outside its boundaries. As an example, the Cedar-Hemlock stands in Hamill Creek represent some of the most extensive tracts of interior old growth forests found in the provincial park system. Removal of this forest through wildfire would represent an irreplaceable loss to society. As a real constraint, there is also the need to recognize outside resource interests adjacent to the Conservancy.

As revealed by the in-depth biophysical inventories completed by the Ministry of Environment for the Purcell Mountains, the Conservancy forms part of an extensive area of significant wildlife values. For the most part, the Conservancy contains only the upper elevational regions of wildlife ranges which extend down the valleys and ridges into the Columbia Valley and Kootenay Lake. As a consequence, wildlife management strategies for the Conservancy must be integrated with those of the larger wildlife management units.

This region of British Columbia has a lengthy history of mining and mineral exploration and some areas within and adjacent to the Conservancy have been subject to mineral exploration. While only a few mineral claims exist within the Conservancy, there are numerous claims in the peripheral lands. A preliminary mineral potential study undertaken by the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources in 1989 has identified zones of high mineral potential in the area. Future boundary reviews and access management strategies outside the Conservancy will take these values into account.

The visual and recreational resources of the Conservancy are key factors contributing to its wilderness quality and sense of remoteness. The visitor can stand anywhere in the heart of the Conservancy, look in all directions, and see no evidence of man's activities. Retention of these qualities will present a challenge to resource managers.

While the general strategy for resource management in the Conservancy will be one of non-intervention with nature's processes, the protection of special values within the Conservancy and of adjacent resource interests will have to be addressed. Decisions will be made with caution and thorough understanding of

the consequences, and will involve inter-agency co-ordination and consultation with public interest groups and individuals. It is proposed that public involvement be incorporated into resource management planning for the Conservancy through informal meetings with key public groups including wildlife associations, park and conservation associations, guides and outfitters and commercial resource interests. Representatives from pertinent groups would meet as required with parks staff to provide public perspective on various concerns and considerations for resource management in the Conservancy. These meetings would provide an opportunity for parks staff to exchange ideas and discuss issues with relevant public interest groups.

2. Natural Resource Management Objectives and Actions

a. Land

Objectives:

i. To maintain the integrity of the wilderness core area in the Purcell Mountains, as approximated by the 1974 Conservancy boundaries.

ii. To work toward rational boundaries for the Conservancy using height-of-land or other topographical features related to ecosystem, wildlife, wilderness recreation and commercial resource values.

iii. To provide the strongest level of protection for the final Conservancy boundaries and for the wilderness resources within the boundaries.

iv. To assure public access to the Conservancy by existing trails.

v. To protect the Dewar Hotsprings from recreational use impacts.

Actions:

i. Retain the establishing Orders-in-Council under Section 6 of the Environment and Land Use Act to ensure continued adherence to the original purpose, concept and objectives for designating the Conservancy.

- Designate the lands within present (1974) boundaries as a Class A park under the Park Act.

- Retain the name Purcell Wilderness Conservancy to emphasize the overriding purpose to preserve wilderness.

ii. Undertake review of the boundaries through inter-agency evaluation of resource potentials including wilderness recreation, wildlife, minerals and timber values. This review process will involve public input to arrive at recommendations for boundary revisions.

iii. Upon completion of the boundary review, or no later than 1993, designate lands retained as Class A park under Schedule A of Section 5 of the Park Act to ensure that the park's area cannot be reduced except through review by the Legislature.

- ♦ Upon completion of the boundary review, designate any lands added to the Conservancy as recreation areas under the Park Act to allow for appropriate mineral resource assessment.

- ♦ Cooperate closely with other agencies through established coordinated management processes to obtain support for park resource and access interests on lands surrounding the Conservancy.

iv. Negotiate legal land access to Fry Creek Canyon Trail through right-of-way or easement acquisition from Johnson's Landing.

v. Complete a management plan which establishes protection of the Dewar Creek Hotsprings ecosystem and resolves existing and potential outdoor recreation impacts.

b. Minerals

Objective:

To acquire all existing mineral tenures in the Conservancy.

Action:

i. Undertake acquisition of the mineral claim rights in the Conservancy in accordance with Ministry policies and procedures.

c. Water

Objective:

To maintain the pure, unpolluted quality of the water in all lakes and drainages within the Conservancy.

Actions:

i. Periodically monitor selected lakes and water courses in the Conservancy for water quality.

ii. No water use tenures will be issued in the Conservancy.

iii. Cooperate with the Ministry of Environment to ensure protection of watershed and fishery values in all drainages.

d. Vegetation

Objectives:

i. To protect rare and provincially significant plant communities and species found in the Conservancy.

ii. To protect critical wildlife habitats, particularly for threatened species.

iii. To maintain the diversity of plant species, associations and varied aged forests which represent the natural vegetation patterns and conditions of the Purcell Mountains.

iv. To allow natural successional processes to occur without human intervention within the limits set for protection of special plant and wildlife habitats, species, maintenance of natural diversity and protection of resource interests adjacent to the Conservancy.

v. To work with other agencies to co-ordinate resource management interests outside and adjacent to the Conservancy boundaries.

vi. To discourage the introduction of non-native plant species.

vii. To encourage non-destructive scientific studies to improve the knowledge of the Conservancy's plant associations.

Actions:

i. Continue management of fires in line with present park and Ministry of Forests policies until a long term fire management plan is ready for implementation.

The Ministry of Forests is responsible for fire control actions as approved by the Ministry of Parks, which has legislative jurisdiction over all resources in parks. The parks district manager will co-ordinate with the Ministry of Forests in the planning and conduct of fire fighting measures. All potentially large fires, particularly those threatening to escape Conservancy boundaries, will be fought. Mechanized ground access will only be employed in exceptional circumstances where there is no other recourse to prevent escape outside the boundaries.

Pending more specific guidance from a fire management plan, discretion will be allowed in decisions relating to the level of control effort for small, isolated fires. Fires posing little threat to wildlife and other values and which are projected to burn out along natural breaks may be allowed to run their course. Decisions will be based on the biophysical inventory information and consultation with staff of other Ministries.

ii. Develop a long term vegetation management strategy for the park. Elements in this strategy will include:

- Involvement of the public in review and development of resource management plans and decisions.

- Expanding inventory, with priority placed on identification of forest types, rare plant species, sensitive plant communities and critical wildlife habitats.

- Researching and assessing potential effects of fire relating to variations in seasonal weather patterns, landforms, soils and local microclimatic conditions. The biophysical inventory will serve as a primary basis for the assessment. The process will be closely co-ordinated with the Ministries of Environment and Forests.

- Preparing fire management guidelines based on analysis of inventories and fire impact assessments. Special attention will be given to protecting old growth forest in the Hamill Creek Special Feature Zone. Consideration will be given to the use of naturally caused and, perhaps, prescribed fires to maintain vegetation and wildlife species diversity in the remainder of the Conservancy. The process will draw on expertise from other agencies and involvement of the public liaison group. The fire management guidelines will be considered a priority for follow up.
- Accepting insect and disease infestations as a normal course of nature. Control measures will only be applied in extraordinary circumstances where outside forest interests or irretrievable plant or wildlife values within the Conservancy are threatened.

- Prohibiting all horse and other stock use on the west side drainages to protect sensitive soils and vegetation.

- Developing a grazing plan to determine carrying capacities for horses and other pack stock. Forage availability for horse and other stock will be determined after ensuring ample allowance is retained for wildlife. Limited grazing will be permitted in conjunction with summer trail rides and fall hunting trips, but the use of the Conservancy for pasture of stock will not be permitted. Grazing allocations will provide for equitable availability of forage for Guides and Outfitters and public horse or pack animal users. Grazing by Guides' and Outfitters' stock will be administered through park use permit. For the present, horse users will be permitted to enter the east side drainages of the Conservancy without prior authority. If conditions warrant, restrictions will be applied to limit and distribute numbers of horse parties in certain drainages.

- Encouraging guides and other stock users to supplement grazing by hauling feed to lessen dependency on native species.
- Monitoring grazing use and impacts as a routine and primary function of ranger staff.
- Encouraging the use of stoves instead of campfires in all areas of the Conservancy.
- Establishing a management program to prevent introduction of non-native plant species and, where feasible, to remove them from the Conservancy.

e. **Wildlife**

Objectives:

i. To maintain the existing natural diversity of species presently found in the Conservancy and to allow the natural colonization of other native species.

ii. To protect wildlife habitats.

iii. To provide for public viewing and non-consumptive appreciation of wildlife.

iv. To ensure that hunting use is in balance with maintenance of natural population levels.

v. To encourage scientific wildlife studies and inventories, and research programs in the Conservancy where compatible with other objectives.

Actions:

i. Undertake wildlife inventories on an ongoing basis in the Conservancy. Periodic aircraft based wildlife counts and annual ranger patrols will provide long-term monitoring of wildlife populations and conditions. Records and observations of the Ministry of Environment, the Guide-Outfitters and the public will be incorporated into this inventory process.

ii. Manage wildlife in the Conservancy in close cooperation with the Wildlife Branch and other agencies. Maintenance of wildlife populations within the Conservancy will call for integration with management strategies outside the Conservancy, not only with overlapping habitats but also with the maintenance of winter ranges and protection of migration routes, breeding and calving grounds and other critical habitats situated outside of the boundaries.

iii. Incorporate wildlife considerations in fire impact assessments and fire management guidelines.

Implications to wildlife will be major factors in research or assessments related to vegetation management plans for the Conservancy. In some circumstances, exceptions to the primary policy of non-intervention with natural processes may be warranted. For example, there is strong evidence that a remnant and endangered Caribou herd at the south end of the Conservancy is partially dependent upon pockets of mature subalpine engelmann spruce and alpine fir in the Skookumchuck-Buhl Creeks area for winter survival. In consideration of deteriorating Caribou habitat conditions outside of the Conservancy, protection of these timber pockets may be justified. Decisions relating to wildlife management will be based on biophysical and research data, inter-agency advice and input from public liaison groups.

iv. Set hunting regulations in cooperation with the Wildlife Branch. Regulations will be conservative and designed to provide for low, dispersed levels of use. Hunting use will be closely monitored. Restrictions may eventually be applied to distribute use of horse-based hunting parties in the east side drainages to prevent concentrations of hunting pressure.

v. Work with the Ministries of Environment and Forests in closures to operation of all motorized vehicles for hunting and transport of wildlife. Existing closures for hunting purposes in Skookumchuck, St. Mary and Findlay Creeks will be supported and closures will be recommended for Dutch, Toby, Fry and Carney Creeks through inter-agency and public involvement road access planning programs.

vi. Encourage scientific research related to wildlife species in the Conservancy.

vii. Existing trapline holders will be permitted to continue trapping, however, BC Parks will endeavour to acquire trapping rights as they become available. As the whole of the Conservancy is closed to motorized access, trappers will be required to operate their traplines without benefit of snowmobiles. Trappers will not be permitted to build cabins. Staff will continue to monitor trapping activities in the Conservancy.

f. **Fisheries**

Objectives:

i. To maintain natural stocks of cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, Dolly Varden and mountain whitefish within the Conservancy without artificial stocking.

ii. To assure angling pressures do not adversely affect the viability of native stocks.

Actions:

i. Monitor fish populations, aquatic conditions and angling use of the Conservancy. Present angling pressures within the Conservancy are relatively light and are not believed to affect indigenous fish populations. If angling becomes a factor in any noticeable decline of fisheries values, tighter regulations will be imposed to reduce pressures.

ii. Consider potential impacts to fisheries in resource management decisions in the Conservancy, particularly relative to fire and vegetation management planning. Fisheries management objectives and actions in the Conservancy will be co-ordinated with those outside of the Conservancy in all of the major drainages.

iii. Depend on natural recruitment to maintain fisheries stocks in the Conservancy. There will be no stocking of fish or other artificial measures taken to enhance fishery values in the Conservancy.

g. **Recreation and Visual Resources**

Objective:

To ensure that resource management activities, visitor use and facility developments pose minimal impacts to recreation and visual features of the Conservancy.

Actions:

i. Locate and design all facilities in harmony with the visual setting. Attention will be placed on aesthetics in review of long-term location of guides' cabins and camps and location of trails on visually-sensitive slopes, lake settings and meadow environments.

ii. Recognize the role of fire, insects and disease in the maintenance of a mosaic of visual patterns. Short-term impacts of natural fire and insect and disease infestations may have to be accepted as a consequence of letting nature take its course, with the recognition that these processes

are essential to retain the inherent diversity of vegetation patterns and visual landscapes.

iii. Maintain close involvement in the review of forest development plans and mineral exploration and development referrals in the various drainages leading into the Conservancy to present the case for protection of recreation and aesthetic values, as far as possible.

h. Cultural Resources

Objective:

To record and, where appropriate, protect cultural resource values which relate to Native Indian and early exploration use of the Conservancy.

Actions:

i. Conduct a cultural heritage resource inventory to include old cabins and archaeological resources of the Conservancy. Archaeological experts feel that the area may contain significant prehistoric and historic archaeological resources.

ii. Pursue designation of the Earl Grey Trail as a Heritage Trail under the provincial Heritage Conservation Act.

iii. Pursue registration of the Earl Grey Trail as a Provincial Recreation Corridor.

iv. Recommend establishment of a map reserve, under Section 12 of the Land Act, over that portion of the west side of the Earl Grey Trail lying outside of the Conservancy to provide consistency and continuity with the existing Section 12 reserve on the east side.

v. Pursue, in joint venture with the Ministry of Forests, the protection and maintenance of the Earl Grey Trail as a Historic Trail Corridor between the present trailheads at the lower end of Hamill Creek, near Argenta, and at the road end immediately west of the junction of Jumbo and Toby Creeks. The trail will be kept, wherever feasible, to the original historic route followed by Earl Grey and will be maintained to a rough but safe and passable condition (Type 3 or 4 standard) to reflect the wilderness objectives of the Conservancy. Trail maintenance will be carried out on a co-operative basis, with the Ministry of Forests accepting responsibility for those sections outside of the Conservancy. The Ministry of Forests is investigating the feasibility of preserving the Earl Grey Cabin, which falls under its jurisdiction.

F. VISITOR SERVICES

1. Introduction

a. General Concept

The Master Planning process has affirmed continued public support for the originally conceived purpose and concept for the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy. Accordingly, the establishing Order-in-Council and the definitions and policies for wilderness, as interpreted through the provincial park zoning system, will provide the basis for development and management of the Conservancy for recreation use.

The wilderness experience, as intended for the Conservancy and as sought by the visitor, depends upon:

- sense of remoteness (well removed from the presence of man, roads, resource development, etc.);
- sense of wildness (wildlife and the wilderness landscapes they inhabit are as nature intended);
- sense of timelessness (wilderness is forever; others have come before and the visitor will leave the wilderness as he found it for others that follow);
- sense of solitude (few or no contacts with humans outside the visitor's own party):
- sense of adventure (contends with the rigors and hazards of wilderness on its own terms);
- sense of independence (freedom from controls, flexibility to choose routes, camp sites, etc.);
- sense of self-reliance (dependence upon experience, skills and resourcefulness).

All of these factors form the essence of what constitutes the wilderness experience and, as far as constraints to protect the environment and to provide fair and equitable rights to different recreation interests will permit, they will form guiding principles for visitor use management. For the most part, these factors are intangible and difficult to qualify or measure, and park managers and other resource agencies will have to be particularly sensitive to the values and perceptions of wilderness users. BC Parks staff will continue to work with the public, primarily through a public liaison group to ensure that the principles of wilderness management as provided by the Master Plan are appropriately interpreted and applied.

b. Access Strategy

The present length of roadless access to the Conservancy boundaries in all of the drainages except Dewar and St. Mary has maintained the wilderness atmosphere and sense of remoteness within the Conservancy. The boundaries are a very long trek of nearly 30 kilometres from the roadheads in both the Findlay and Dutch Creek drainages and relatively shorter day hikes of 6 to 10 kilometres in the Toby, Skookumchuck, Fry and Hamill Creek drainages.

Roads leading to the Conservancy boundaries in the west fork of the St. Mary and Dewar Creek drainages pose problems for wilderness management. The valley meadows and basins of the west fork of the St. Mary River are considered too accessible to allow for any sense of wilderness isolation. The close access into Dewar Creek allows for reasonable day use hiking distance into Dewar Hotsprings and Bugle Basin and the resultant increasingly heavy use pressures will force BC Parks to formalize facilities and regulate visitor activities to prevent environmental impacts.

Since all roads to the Conservancy lie outside of BC Parks' jurisdiction, the cooperation of other agencies, particularly the Ministry of Forests, will be relied upon to develop and maintain public vehicle access strategies for the Conservancy. BC Parks will provide input into other existing Ministry of Forests' planning processes, particularly the Pre-Harvest Silviculture Prescription and five-year development plans to address access management concerns for the Conservancy. The Co-ordinated Access Management Planning (C.A.M.P.) process which is administered by the Ministry of Forests and involves inter-agency and public input, will serve as one of the mechanisms for reviewing and establishing road access requirements for the Conservancy. The Ministry of Parks will pursue access development and management strategies to provide reasonable two-wheel drive conditions to pre-determined destinations, beyond which BC Parks will recommend that all public vehicle use for recreation be prohibited. The Ministry of Parks will recommend that public vehicle access for recreation be permitted no closer to the Conservancy than:

West Fork St. Mary - at junction with Keer Creek (Little Joe Creek)
Dewar Creek - present road head
White River - in vicinity of Jurak Creek confluence
Buhl Creek - in vicinity of confluence with Skookumchuck Creek
Skookumchuck Creek - between Greenland Creek and Buhl Creek
Findlay Creek - in vicinity of westerly boundary of private land holdings.
Dutch Creek - in vicinity of present road end
Toby Creek - in vicinity of present road end
Hamill Creek - in vicinity of present road end
Carney Creek - at the summit of Kootenay Joe Road
Fry Creek - at the present trailhead

Access on these roads for resource development outside the Conservancy may still be allowed by inter-agency review. The Conservancy will remain closed to recreational air access as prescribed by the establishing Order-In-Council.

c. **Information Strategy**

The wilderness experience, as defined for the Conservancy, projects an image of the unknown and undiscovered which will serve to guide the promotion of the Conservancy, visitor information, visitor access and orientation and interpretation of the Conservancy's natural and cultural resources.

Information about the Conservancy will be primarily directed through a brochure and trailhead information panels. The brochure will provide some details about the Earl Grey Trail relating to the route and recommendations for its use as well as general description of the remainder of the Conservancy to distinguish the differences between the east and west side drainages and the types of recreation opportunities offered. The brochure will also serve to inform potential visitors about the challenging nature of wilderness travel in the Conservancy and encourage low impact camping and wilderness travel techniques. The brochure will be made available to the public through various park and tourism information outlets. Trailhead information will also instill a basic code of ethics for wilderness use and provide in more specific detail than the brochure the techniques for low impact camping and horse use.

Roads to the major trailheads will be signed. Visitors will be forewarned that few facilities or signs are provided beyond the trailheads. There will be no directional signs in the Conservancy except on the Earl Grey Trail. Boundary markers will be placed on all main trails entering the Conservancy. Information signs will be situated at Dewar Creek Hotsprings to inform people about the fragility of the Hotsprings and explain the restrictions on camping and use of the area. Interpretive signs will be situated at trailheads.

Private sector initiatives such as magazine articles and films will be encouraged as means of conveying information about the natural and cultural history of the Conservancy.

2. **Visitor Opportunities**

a. **Backpacking, Hiking**

Objective:

To provide wilderness backpacking and hiking opportunities, with emphasis on multi-day trips. On the east and south drainages and over the Earl Grey Corridor, existing trails will allow for access routes into and through the Conservancy. The Carney and Fry Creek drainages within the Conservancy will be maintained as pristine wilderness and the trails that were illegally cleared over the last number of years will be naturally rehabilitated. The

Conservancy will offer innumerable possibilities for interconnecting and challenging routes.

Actions:

i. Maintain all main access trails on the East and South drainages and Earl Grey Trail in passable condition.

ii. Designate campsites away from Dewar Hotsprings to alleviate user impacts. Designated sites, facilities and user controls will only be considered in situations where there are environmental impacts or concerns for public safety. Toilets, fire circles and food caches will be appropriate facilities at the more heavily used sites.

iii. Allow for natural rehabilitation of the illegally cut trails in Fry Creek.

iv. Monitor trail and backpacking use of the Conservancy through ranger patrols and trail counters and registers.

b. **Mountaineering, Ridge Walking, Scrambling**

Objective:

To provide mountaineering opportunities in a wilderness environment.

Action:

Monitor climbing use in the Conservancy.

c. **Natural and Cultural History Appreciation, Photography**

Objectives:

i. To provide for study and appreciation of nature and undisturbed ecosystems.

ii. To offer outstanding opportunities for viewing and photographing scenery and wildlife in a wilderness environment.

iii. To allow visitors to discover the beauty and natural wonders of the Conservancy largely on their own.

iv. To provide perspective on the history and use of the Earl Grey Trail.

v. To determine the cultural significance of all remaining structures in the Conservancy.

Actions:

i. Maintain the existing trails on the east and south drainages and the Earl Grey Trail in passable condition (Type 3 or 4 park trail standards) to guide visitors through parts of the Conservancy.

ii. Maintain the Carney and Fry Creek portions of the Conservancy as pristine wilderness for those people searching for natural environments to conduct nature studies and photography.

iii. Allow the established Guides and Outfitters to operate summer trips into the Conservancy for photography and nature appreciation.

d. Fishing

Objective:

To provide fishing opportunities in a wilderness environment.

Action:

Monitor fishing use. The majority of visitors spend only a small portion of their visit fishing.

e. Hunting

Objectives:

i. To allow wilderness hunting opportunities in the Conservancy.

ii. To allow guided and outfitted hunting opportunities in the east side of the Conservancy.

Actions:

i. Maintain trails in the east and south side drainages and the Earl Grey Trail for hunting access into the Conservancy.

ii. Monitor hunting activities through fall ranger patrols.

iii. Regulate horse use and hunters if pressures become too concentrated in portions of the Conservancy with the objective of maintaining low dispersed hunting use throughout the Conservancy.

iv. Develop operating plans with the Guides and Outfitters. Emphasis will be placed on maintaining an equitable balance of hunting opportunities between non-guided and guided hunters through cooperation of the Guides and allocation of guiding camps and facilities.

f. **Horse Use**

Objectives:

i. To provide for non-commercial horse riding opportunities in the east and south side drainages of the Conservancy. Horse use will not be permitted on the west side.

ii. To provide guided trail riding opportunities in the east and south side drainages of the Conservancy.

Actions:

i. Maintain trails on the east and south side drainages of the Conservancy in passable conditions for horse use.

ii. Provide educational information at east and south side trailheads about low impact horse travel ethics and techniques. Particular emphasis will be placed on keeping party size and number of horses to a minimum.

g. **Winter Use**

Objective:

To provide for non-mechanized wilderness recreation opportunities for ski touring and snowshoeing.

Actions:

i. Monitor winter use.

ii. Allow recreational guiding opportunities for winter touring.

3. **Private Sector Role**

Objectives:

i. To allow existing guiding operations in the Conservancy.

ii. To allow limited private sector involvement in the provision of recreation services which are compatible with the Conservancy objectives.

Actions:

i. Control existing guide and outfitting rights in the Conservancy through park use permits. Guides will continue to have the right to operate through various seasons to include summer trail riding and photographic guiding tours along with traditional spring and fall guided hunting trips. No

provision will be made for expansion of present guiding territories. Permanent buildings will be restricted to the established base camps; only planned and authorized structures will be permitted at satellite camps, and no new trails will be permitted.

The Ministry of Parks has jurisdiction over the operation and development of guiding territories within the Conservancy and will strive toward maintaining a co-operative working relationship with the guides in determining duration and location of guiding activities. All guiding operations will be annually monitored and will be subject to change based on assessments of conflicts with other user interests and resource impacts. BC Parks will develop the understanding and long term commitment of individual guides and outfitters to maintain dispersed levels of guiding activity in the Conservancy.

ii. Review private sector proposals in context with Conservancy objectives and park policies. Only those activities that have short tenure (less than 3 months), involve no permanent facilities or development, and have no impact on the environment or other users will be permitted. Appropriate types of commercial activities may include guiding for photography, hiking, winter ski touring and outdoor training.

4. Management Services

Staffing priorities for the Conservancy will ensure that various management responsibilities will be carried out according to the guidelines of the Master Plan and the established policies of the Ministry. Management and operation functions include:

- regulating public use;
- monitoring horse use;
- monitoring environmental conditions;
- monitoring hunting use;
- maintenance of trails;
- collection of user data;
- promoting and teaching wilderness ethics and low impact camping and wilderness travel techniques;
- overseeing guiding and outfitting and other private sector activities in the Conservancy.

The extensive nature of the Conservancy and dispersed use levels dictate that park rangers operate on a roving patrol basis. Helicopters will be used for management purposes with due consideration for maintaining the wilderness atmosphere. On the east and south sides only, rangers may employ riding stock to conduct patrols.

The west side of the Conservancy will be administered through the West Kootenay district office and the east side by the East Kootenay district office.

5. Promotion

The title "Wilderness Conservancy" conveys a simple but special distinction from other types of wilderness designations including provincial and national parks. The public at large appears to appreciate this distinction and supports the value of preserving the wilderness for its own sake without the need for justification on the basis of economics or numbers of users. It behooves park managers to keep this distinction between the Conservancy and other parks uppermost in considering any information programs for the Conservancy.

The Conservancy brochure and regional/provincial information packages will describe, in a general overview, the wilderness qualities and recreation opportunities of the Conservancy. A major focus of information programs will relate to the vicarious appreciation of wilderness values as represented by the Conservancy and the need to protect and manage such areas in the provincial park system.

G. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

1. Planning

- Designate the Conservancy as Class "A" park.
- Undertake boundary review in context with inter-agency land use analysis of Kootenays.
- Undertake acquisition of mineral claims.
- Involvement with access, management plans and forest development plans.

2. Resource Management

- Expand vegetation and wildlife inventories.
- Fire research.
- Fire management plans.
- Conduct grazing assessments.
- Conduct archaeological resource inventory.

3. Visitor Services

- Develop a Conservancy brochure.
- Conduct monitoring and patrol activities.
- Develop operating plans with Guides and Outfitters.
- Designate campsites and relocate trail at Dewar Hotsprings.
- Develop trailhead information relating to wilderness ethics and low impact camping and trail techniques.

Purcell Wilderness Conservancy

MASTER PLAN

Appendix A
Public Involvement

BC Parks

PURCELL WILDERNESS CONSERVANCY

APPENDIX A

Public Involvement Process - Chronology

April 1989	An eight (8) page newsletter and questionnaire was sent to more than 30,000 households in the East and West Kootenays as an attachment to local newspapers.
April 28, 1989	Open House meeting in Invermere, meetings with interest groups.
April 29, 1989	Open House meeting in Cranbrook, meetings with interest groups.
May 5&6, 1989	Open House meetings in Nelson, meetings with interest groups.
May 7, 1989	Open House meeting in Kaslo, meetings with interest groups.
May 11, 1989	Open House meeting in Vancouver.
May 17, 1989	Meeting with Outdoor Recreation Council in Vancouver.
November 1989	Results of Public meetings and questionnaires sent out to all participants.
June 1990	Draft Master Plan forwarded to public for comment by September.

Group Submission

1. East Kootenay Environmental Society (Kimberley-Cranbrook)
2. The Kootenay Coalition for Wilderness
3. Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C.
4. The Valhalla Society
5. The Kootenay Mountaineering Club
6. West Kootenay Outdoorsmen
7. Pro Terra-Kootenay Nature Allies
8. Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
9. East Kootenay Environmental Society - Invermere Branch
10. Kaslo Riding Club Society
11. North Arm Wildlife Club
12. East Kootenay Hunters Association
13. Argenta-Johnson's Landing Resource Folio Committee
14. Argenta Community Association
15. Johnson's Landing Community Association
16. Kootenay Nordic Outdoors Club

Public Involvement Process - Results

- 250 individuals attended public meetings
- 16 interest groups presented submissions
- 635 questionnaires were received
- 550 copies of draft Plan were sent out to participants
- 14 letters were received as feedback on the Plan, 8 mainly positive and 2 generally negative from individuals, and 3 positive and one negative from groups.

The Ministry of Environment was closely involved with the preparation of the Master Plan. There was also coordination with the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources.

Purcell Wilderness Conservancy

MASTER PLAN

Appendix B
BC Parks Zone Description

BC Parks

BC Parks Zone Descriptions
Appendix B

Zone	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
Objective	to preserve and present significant natural or cultural resources, features, or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage value.	to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where air access may be permitted to designated sites.	to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassisted backcountry recreation opportunities dependant on a pristine environment where no motorized activities will be allowed.
Use Level	generally low	very low use, to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. use may be controlled to protect the environment.	very low use, to provide solitary experiences and a wilderness atmosphere. use may be controlled to protect the environment.
Means of Access	various may require special access permit	non-mechanized; except may permit low frequencyair access to designates sites foot, canoe (horses may be permitted).	non-mechanized (no air access). foot, canoe (horses may be permitted
Location	determined by location of special resources; may be surrounded by or associated with any of the other zones.	remote: generally not visited on a day use basis.	remote: generally not visited on a day use basis.
Size of Zone	small: less than 2000 hectares.	large: greater than 5000 hectares.	large: greater than 5000 hectares

Zone	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
Boundary Definition	area required by biophysical characteristics or the nature and extent of cultural resources (adequate to afford protection). Areas of visitor interest for specific activities supported by air access.	defined by ecosystem limits and geographic features. boundaries will encompass areas of visitor interest for spcific activities supported by air access.	will be designated under the Park Act.
Recreation Opportunities	sight-seeing, historic and nature appreciation. may be subjecty to temporary closures or permanently restricted access.	backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, nature and historic appreciation, hunting, fisingh, snowshoeing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, specialized activities.	same as wilderness recreation except no hunting.
Facilities	interpretive facilties only, resources are to be protected	minimal facility development limited development for user convenience and safety, and protection of the environment e.g. trails, primitive campsite etc. some basic facilities at access nodes, e.g. dock, primitive shelter, etc.	none

Zone	Special Feature	Wilderness Recreation	Wilderness Conservation
Impacts on Natural Environment	none; resources to be maintained unimpaired	natural area generally free of humans evidence of human presence confined to specific facility sites. facilities visually comparavble with natural setting.	natural area generally free of evidence of humans.
Management Guidelines	high level of management protection with on-going monitoring. oriented to maintaining resources and, where appropriate a high quality recreational and interpretive experience. active or passive management depending on size, location, and nature of the resource. visitor access may be restricted to preserve recreation experience & limit impact.	oriented to protecting a pristine environment. Management actions are minimal and not evident. level of use will be managed to protect the natural environment and the visitor experience.	oriented to protecting a pristine environment - management actions are minmal and not evident. level of use will be managed to protect the natural environment and the visitor experience.
Examples of Zones	Tidepools in Botanical Beach Park Sunshine Meadows in Mount Assiniboine Park.	Quanchus Mountains Wilderness in Tweedsmuir Park. Wilderness zone in Spatsizi Park	Central Valhallas Wilderness in Valhalla Provincial Park. Proposed Garibaldi Park Nature Conservancy area.